

# Arkansas

## *Ecological Services Field Office*

photo: Luke Meduna,  
Ark. Tech U.



photo: USFWS/Lisa Irwin



photo: AGFC/Kelly Irwin

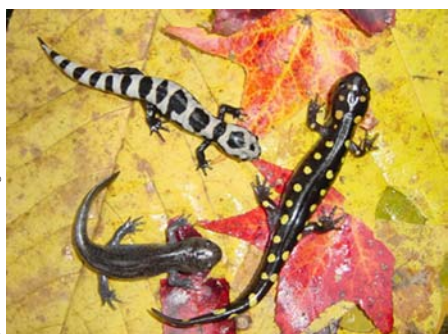


photo: USFWS/Ron Parker

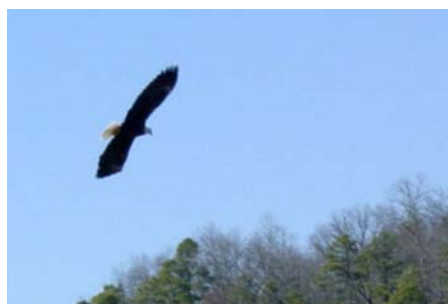


photo: USFWS/  
Lindsey Lewis



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### **Photos (top to bottom)**

*Interior least tern.*

*Bird rookery at Grassy Lake.*

*Mole salamanders at Crowley's Ridge.*

*American bald eagle.*

*Cave entrance in Arkansas' Karst Region.*

### **Station Facts**

- Established: 1997.
- FY05 budget: \$1,348,000.
- Staff: 18.

### **Station Goals**

- Conserve, protect, and enhance Service trust resources such as migratory birds and endangered species, and their habitats.
- Restore degraded wetlands on privately owned lands.
- Investigate, prevent, and remediate effects of environmental pollution to maximize quality habitat for Service trust species.
- Implement recovery and Section 7 consultation activities for 29 federally listed endangered and threatened species in Arkansas.

### **Services Provided to**

- Private citizens.
- Federal and state agencies.
- Local governments and community groups.
- Other Service divisions.

### **Activity Highlights**

- Annually review over 200 federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects for impacts on fish and wildlife.
- Annually conduct over 1000 formal and informal endangered species consultations.

- Assist other agencies in hazardous material spill contingency planning to minimize effects on fish and wildlife.
- Consult on Farm Bill and Swampbuster issues and review Wetland Reserve Program applications.
- Represent fish and wildlife interests in wetland issues, navigation, hydropower, gravel mining.
- Coordinate with other agencies on wetland restoration and endangered species recovery efforts.
- Work toward the conservation of caves and springs, and the fish and wildlife they support.
- Work with all interests to manage the many uses of the White River: fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, navigation, agriculture, and hydropower.

### **Arkansas Delta Sub-Office**

The Arkansas Delta Sub-Office, collocated with the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, was created in 1999 because of the need to have staff who could work closely with the White River and Cache River NWRs on many significant natural resource issues in the lower White River basin. The office has since expanded to cover the entire Arkansas Delta.

Sub-Office staff work on Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act activities for several federal water development projects including the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project, the Bayou Meto Irrigation and Flood Control Project, the Southeast Arkansas Irrigation Project, and the proposed White River Navigation Enlargement Project. In addition, Sub-Office staff work on environmental restoration projects such as the Brownsville Branch 1135 project, coordinate with refuges on resource issues, such as the White River NWR spoil areas, and consult with other federal agencies on endangered species issues.

### Questions and Answers

*What are the Service's goals in Arkansas?*

The Service seeks to conserve, protect, and enhance the Service's trust resources in Arkansas such as migratory birds, endangered species, and their habitats. The forested wetlands in the delta, particularly those along the White and Cache Rivers, provide important habitat for resident and migratory waterfowl and other fish and wildlife resources.

At the same time, the Service acknowledges that there are other users of the natural resource base that have a claim to these resources such as navigation, agriculture, and hydropower. The Service seeks to understand the needs of these competing uses and to make recommendations that protect environmental resources while allowing for economic development. In addition, the Service works to protect habitat for endangered and threatened species that may be impacted by resource developments.

The Service reviews and comments on over 200 Section 10/404 wetland permit applications per year. During these permit reviews, the Service seeks to make recommendations and modifications to projects that would first avoid, then minimize and rectify impacts, and finally compensate for wetland losses. The Service seeks to avoid loss of wetland habitat values and to restore previously degraded wetlands.

The Service works with the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission and other federal and state agencies to establish a series of wetland mitigation bank sites throughout Arkansas that can be used when there is a need to mitigate for wetland losses. Wetland mitigation banks contribute to the restoration of wetlands and increase wildlife that is dependant upon wetlands.

*What are the major contaminant issues in Arkansas?*

Contaminant issues in Arkansas include discharges of waste from large swine and chicken rearing facilities, discharges of raw sewage from municipal sewage treatment

plants, drift and runoff from agricultural lands that have been treated with pesticides, runoff from hazardous waste sites (superfund as well as many other industrial waste sites). These sources of contamination in many instances adversely affect National Wildlife Refuges and other Service trust responsibilities such as migratory birds and endangered species.

Impacts of historical and current oil production to trust resources are also currently being assessed in southern Arkansas. A partnership between the Service and other federal and state agencies has been established to assess problematic oil facilities. These efforts have led to an increase in the number of sites meeting federal and state regulations, as well as the remediation of oil pits that impact trust resources. In addition, remediation of oil and brine damaged areas is being completed through cooperative agreements with oil producers. These remediation projects will create habitat for trust resources and reduce water quality impacts from oil and brine associated contaminants.

*How has the Service addressed threatened and endangered species issues in Arkansas?*

The Arkansas Field Office reviews approximately 1000 Federal actions per year under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Our goal is to protect the 29 endangered and threatened species present in Arkansas from further loss by reducing and removing threats to the species and to contribute to the species recovery.

Important threatened and endangered species in Arkansas include the Indiana bat, gray bat, Ozark big-eared bat, Ozark cavefish, and two cave crayfish which are dependent on the unique cave habitats in northern Arkansas. The 9 species of threatened and endangered freshwater mussels (Arkansas fatmucket, Ouachita rock pocketbook, pink mucket, speckled pocketbook, fat pocketbook, winged mapleleaf, curtis pearlymussel, turgid blossom, and scaleshell) that are present in Arkansas' rivers are also a Service

priority. Other endangered or threatened species that are present in the state are the leopard darter, pallid sturgeon, interior least tern, red-cockaded woodpecker, and American burying beetle, among others.

*What are the Service's accomplishments in assisting private landowners in managing habitat on their land?*

The Service has made great strides in Arkansas. Through private land initiatives (Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Arkansas Partners), significant gains have been made to restore and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife populations.

The Service and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) have a Cooperative Agreement to assist private landowners with habitat management. Over 60 Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects have been implemented by the AGFC, and over 7,000 acres of wetlands have been restored or enhanced throughout Arkansas since 1995.

The Service and the AGFC implemented two streambank stabilization projects in the Ouachita Mountains to correct abusive land use practices and restore stream bank integrity.

Through January 2005, the Arkansas Partners Project, administered by Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU), covered 36 counties in the Mississippi River delta, and the floodplains of the Ouachita and Red rivers. The Project has assisted more than 500 landowners in developing 211,821 acres of seasonal wetland habitat, primarily on agricultural lands. Since 1993, DU and its Project partners (NRCS, USFWS, and AGFC) have provided 3,851 water control structures for use in nearly 2000 wetland management units.

Several hundred thousand acres have been assessed for development as wintering and migration habitat for waterfowl and other waterbirds in Arkansas.